

Editorial

In the European Union one in five women has suffered violence at the hands of her companion at least once in her life. Of all crimes of violence recorded, 25 % involve aggression by a man against his wife or partner. In view of the scale of this violence, the Commission launched a campaign this year for zero-tolerance of violence against women.

As was announced in past issues, various tools have been made available for NGOs and national, regional and local authorities to back up their actions and give them a European dimension. These tools comprise a logo and 17 posters with messages targeting specific groups, all of which are available on a CD-ROM. A TV clip and brochure are being finalised and will be distributed shortly. Last but not least, the Commission will provide support for actions at grass-roots level, so that about 40 NGO projects will receive aid of EUR 2 million. The purpose of those projects is to help break the wall of silence surrounding violence against women, an issue that has too often been consigned to the private sphere.

Three questions for Viviane Reding



Ms Viviane Reding, the Commissioner whom Mr Prodi has put in charge of education and culture, will have amongst her duties the development of various facets of European citizenship. Since this field covers equality of opportunity, we have included the following extracts from her answers at the European Parliament hearing that expressly touch on this matter.

What specific measures do you intend to adopt in your day-to-day work to implement the principle of equality of opportunity?

To begin with, I have set a good example by choosing a woman, Viviane Hoffman, as my deputy Chef de Cabinet. I shall see to it that measures to ensure equal opportunities in respect of staff policy, (the responsibility of my future colleague, Neil Kinnock), are fully implemented in respect of my own staff. I shall participate fully and actively in the work of the group of Commissioners on equal opportunities, which will be chaired by the President, Mr Prodi, the permanent members being my future colleagues Neil Kinnock (internal staffing policy), Anna Diamantopoulou (employment and social affairs) and myself (education and vocational training). In my opinion this could prove to be an extremely effective instrument to develop and implement a genuine equal opportunities policy. The systematic integration of equal opportunities policies and practices in all the Commission's fields of activities is currently a top priority at European level.

What specific measures do you intend to take to implement equality of opportunity in the area covered by your responsibilities?

In my opinion, education, training and youth policy provide an eminently suitable framework for priority action which can achieve tangible results, particularly with regard to participation of men and women in education and training; in this respect information, guidance and counselling services play a fundamental part. Equality of opportunity is a priority across the board for all action programmes concerning education, training and youth opportunities. It is already specifically referred to in oral and written communications (application forms, selection criteria and invitations to tender) to potential project promoters; the publication entitled Key education and training statistics systematically provides comparative statistics for involvement by men and women in these areas. Websites specifically devoted to equal opportunities in the fields of education, training and youth are now being set up. However, despite this, the projects submitted to us still fail to reflect this principle sufficiently.

If, despite all that has been done, the situation is not satisfactory, what do you intend to do?

Past experience shows that a dual strategy, consisting not only of making equal opportunities part of every area of activity, but also in parallel taking positive measures to counter sex-based inequalities, offers a promising way forward, as shown by the current Leonardo programme. The Socrates II and YOUTH programmes will adopt similar approaches in future.

In addition, during my term of office, I intend to make every effort to ensure that:

— existing mainstreaming policies are pursued systematically in the next series of

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action programmes by means of appropriate internal monitoring and assessment;

- mainstreaming positive measures and policies and practices to encourage family life continue to be developed and implemented as part of the action programmes for which I shall be responsible;

— progress reports are forwarded to the European Parliament committees and other committees concerned at European level.

Equality of opportunity in employment: the Union takes a big step forward

PROGRESS IN ITALY, AUSTRIA, PORTUGAL AND SWEDEN

In Italy specific financing is earmarked for a programme to support entrepreneurship by women. Parental benefits have been established and child-minding arrangements have been developed. In addition, the official statistics now cover those aspects. In Austria mainstreaming takes the form of specific quantitative objectives for the employment of men and women. In addition, EUR 100 million has been earmarked for the establishment of creches and nursery schools. In Portugal a new centre monitors measures to promote equality of opportunity contained in collective agreements in industry. Draft legislation on parental leave was adopted in July 1999. Lastly, a database compiles information on aid schemes for woman entrepreneurs and on job creation in sectors where women are under-represented. In Sweden an official has been appointed with responsibility for monitoring mainstreaming. Benefits for parents looking after children have been capped as an incentive for mothers to return to work. Incentives have been put in place to help women to get better jobs.

The Commission's survey *Joint Employment Report 1999* is perhaps the biggest step it has ever taken towards real equality in the workplace. The report, published on 8 September, includes a discussion of equality of opportunity in all Member States, identifying the difficulties encountered and the solutions adopted. In addition, it has published its *Employment Guidelines 2000*. Those guidelines focus on four major issues, one of which is, in fact, equality of opportunity. Lastly, to round off its measures to promote employment, the Commission will present draft recommendations on employment that the Council will make to the Member States. One of the chapters in the recommendations deals specifically with women.

Women encounter many difficulties in seeking employment and, having found a job, in the workplace too. The scale of those difficulties varies between Member States, however, in terms of their social and political frameworks. The *Joint Employment Report 1999* (1) concludes that, compared with the previous year, the Member States have generally reinforced their measures in favour of equality of opportunity. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to remedy inequality of salaries and to prevent discrimination in recruitment. But significant progress has been made in Member States such as Italy, Austria, Portugal and Sweden (see table, below).

In the fourth pillar of the *Employment Guidelines 2000*, the Commission presents a series of recommendations to strengthen equality of opportunity, including:

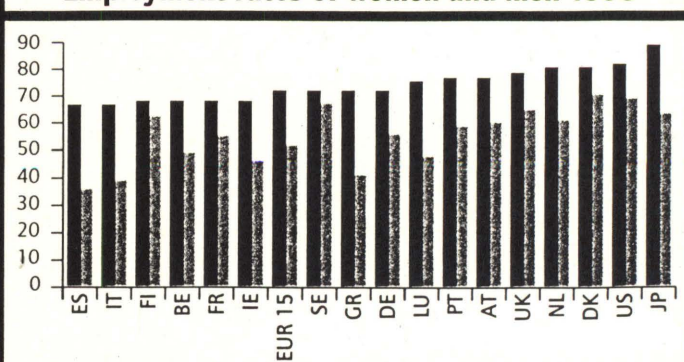
- employment policies concerning the proportion of women as job-seekers;
- reductions in corporation tax where it adversely affects the employment of women;
- removal of obstacles for women who wish to set up a business;
- flexible organisation of work for women.

In order to implement those proposals, the Commission suggests that the Member States should adopt gender-mainstreaming in all employment measures.

Moreover, Member States should take measures to reduce gender-based inequality, so that men and women are fairly represented in all economic sectors and at all levels of work. In order to reconcile work and family life, the Commission suggests that the social partners conclude agreements on the general introduction of more flexible forms of employment (career breaks, part-time work, parental leave, etc.) and on the provision of good-quality services to look after children and other dependent persons. It requests the Member States to make it easier for women to train and return to work after a long break. Lastly, it makes specific recommendations to each Member State on the basis of the conclusions in the *Joint Employment Report*, some of which directly concern equality of opportunity. It has consequently presented a draft recommendation to the Council, which comprises two parts dealing with women in the workplace. The first reviews various tax rules and social security benefits to assess whether they adversely affect women in the workplace, while the second focuses on social and cultural obstacles to women's access to work.

(1) The report is currently at the draft stage.

Employment rates of women and men 1998



Source:
European LFS, US and JP
Eurostat benchmarks.

European Parliament

Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities

At its meeting on 1 and 2 September 1999, the Committee, chaired by Mrs Theorin, considered the Council's common position on the Daphne 2000-04 action programme against violence to women and children. It is expected that Parliament will adopt the programme at its second reading in November.

The Committee also discussed the 2000 budget as presented at its first reading; the vote on the budget will

take place on 13 September at an extraordinary part-session of the Parliament in Strasbourg. It considered that the budget items for health policy and the prevention of AIDS, discrimination between children, gender issues in development policies, positive discrimination in equality of opportunity and the European Women's Lobby did not meet the actual requirements and proposed increases in each line.

POPULATION STATISTICS

According to Eurostat figures, the population of the EU has increased slightly (+ 0.2 %) to 375 329 400 at the end of 1998. The population of all countries except Germany has increased. The average European woman currently has 1.45 children (1.39 in the euro zone). The highest average is in Ireland (1.94) and the lowest in Spain (1.15). Other figures for comparison are USA (2.07) and India (3.24). Infant mortality is continuing to fall, with Sweden attaining the best record for infant mortality (3.5 deaths for 1 000 births). For babies born in 1998, life expectancy for girls is 80.8 and for boys 74.5.

European Commission

Traffic in women in the countries of central and eastern Europe

One of the actions taken as part of the Community policy on defence on human rights is preventing trafficking in women from eastern Europe (the Czech Republic, Poland and Ukraine). Two disturbing features of this traffic led the Commission to take action: the increase in the number of women involved, probably as the result of differences in the standard of living between the EU and eastern Europe, and the difficulty of obtaining proof of trafficking since the women, being illegal immigrants, are afraid to speak out. The Com-

mission's action is based on the 'La Strada' programme set up by a Dutch organisation, the Foundation against Traffic in Women (STV). The action is carried out in close cooperation with local NGOs and takes three forms: information on the traffic and making the public and the authorities aware of the traffic; assistance for women and the provision of information for young girls at risk; training of specialist staff for partner NGOs in the countries involved.

The action was launched as a pilot project in 1995 and is now in its third period (1997-98) with a budget of EUR 252 930 under the Phare programme.

Council of Ministers

Resolution on women and science

At its meeting on research held in May 1999 the Council, with Mrs Edelgard Buhlman, the Federal German Minister for Education and Research as president, adopted a resolution on women and science in response to the Commission communication on that subject presented in February 1999. The Council considers that the gender mainstreaming of research policy is not limited to promotion of women as research workers but should also ensure that research meets the needs of all citizens and contributes to the understanding of gender-relevant issues. It therefore invites the Commission to:

(a) produce, building on Member States' contributions, comparable data and European indicators,

as a basis for a Community-wide assessment of the situation of women in RTD;

- (b) pursue its efforts to encourage the increased participation of women throughout the fifth framework programme;
- (c) propose, in the light of the above-mentioned dialogue with the Member States, guidelines for further initiatives to promote women in RTD;
- (d) deliver a special report to the Council and the European Parliament on progress in implementing the measures proposed in its communication, after two years at the latest, with a view, *inter alia*, to contributing to the preparation of future Community research policies and programmes.

15 October: World Rural Women's Day

Rural women play a major role in food safety and development campaigns. However, their status often prevents them from enjoying rights to land or securing access to vital services. World Rural Women's Day, launched by the Women's World Summit Foundation, aims to change this by training the spotlight on rural women. The foundation is inviting all kinds of organisations to hold events according to local priorities and traditions, to set up networks, and organise round tables, etc.

Regarding the European Union, the European Women's Lobby regrets that the new provisions on the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund do not require the Member States to set up programmes targeting women and do not provide any budget for projects for women although an undertaking was given to secure equal opportunities for women and men. The Lobby states that principles are in place but no specific programmes or funds to implement them are available.

Beijing+5 Global Forum

How far have we come in achieving equality for women? The United Nations wants your views and experience

In June 2000 the UN General Assembly in New York will meet to review whether governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and the private sector have fulfilled the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing.

With this in view WomenWatch, the UN's Internet site for women's issues, is holding the Beijing+5 Global Forum, a series of Internet working groups to provide input for the UN which will be used in its assessment. Around a dozen working-group topics have been selected. The participant identifying the most effective strategy for eliminating a deep-rooted discriminatory practice will be granted a travelling scholarship to participate in the special session in New York. You can participate in the forum through the e-mail address (beijing-plus5@edc.org) or the WomenWatch Internet address (www.un.org/womenwatch).

Conferences

A seminar on violence against women will be organised by the Council of Europe from 4 to 6 November 1999 in Bari, Italy.

The themes of the seminar will be: domestic and sexual violence; domestic slavery, trafficking in women and prostitution; and rape in armed conflict. The seminar will be opened by Mrs Elisa Pozza Tasca, President of the Subcommittee on Violence against Women, Council of Europe, and closed by Mrs Yvette Roudy, President of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Council of Europe.

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Publications

Family and children projects

Inventory of projects regarding families and children co-financed by the European Commission from 1993 to 1997. This survey, which has just been published, provides a brief summary of each project and its outcome.

Catalogue No: CE-17-98-112-EN-C.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment at the workplace in the European Union. This recent publication incorporates the conclusions of two national studies (NL and E), the first covering 11 Member States in the north of the EU together with Norway, while the second surveys five Member States in the south of the EU.

Catalogue No: CE-18-98-138-EN-C.

Women and the judiciary

Women and decision-making in the judiciary in the European Union. This study, which covers the 15 Member States, analyses access to the various professions and the promotion of judges and identifies obstacles to women becoming judges.

Catalogue No: CE-17-98-992-EN-C.

These three publications were produced on the initiative of the Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs of the European Commission (Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Unit).

